

2015

SPAN 202: Intermediate Spanish II (Focus on Literature & Culture)—A Peer Review of Teaching Project Benchmark Portfolio

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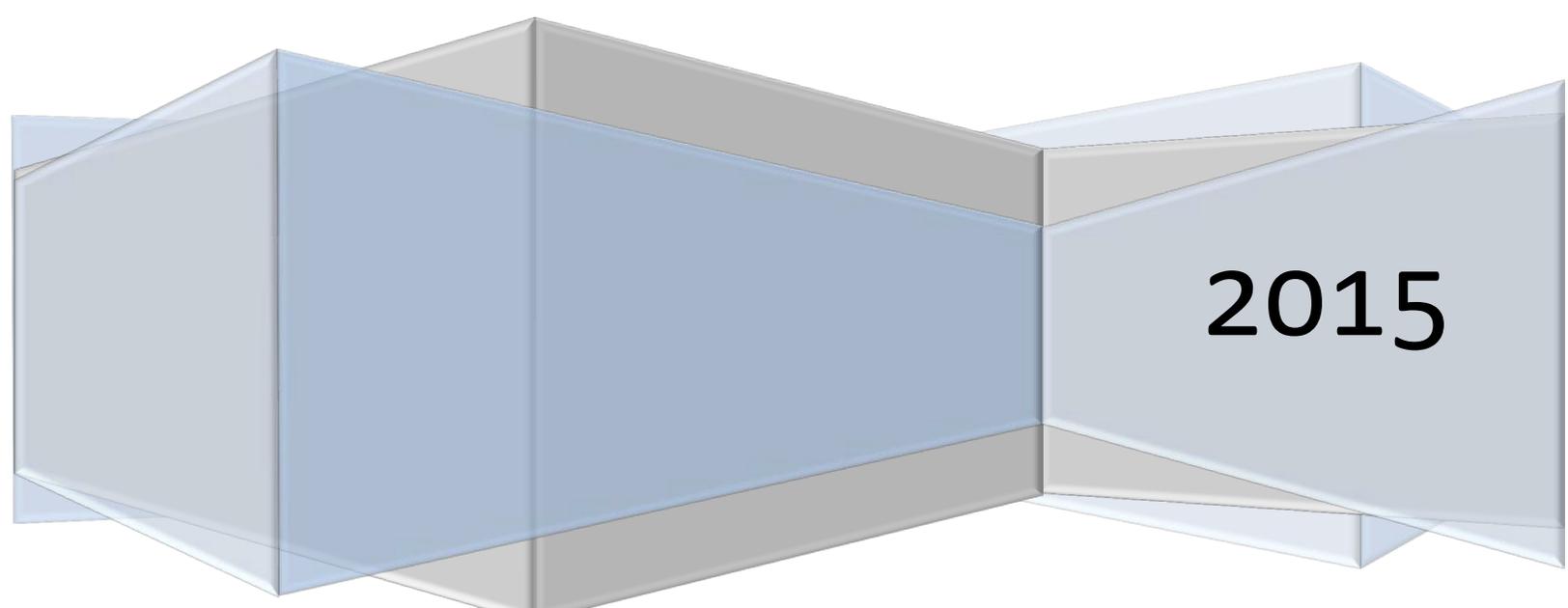
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Curriculum Revision of Spanish 202: Intermediate Spanish II (Focus on Literature and Culture)

A Peer Review of Teaching Project Portfolio

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2015

Contents

1. Description of Spanish 202: Intermediate Spanish II (Focus on Literature and Culture)	4
1.1 Content area	4
1.2 Student population	4
1.3 Place in curriculum.....	4
1.4 Description of course as it existed through Fall 2014.....	5
1.4.1 Stated vs. actual roles of grammar in the course	5
1.4.2 Objective of written and oral summaries	5
2. Goals for the course.....	6
2.1 Change sequence of grammar review	6
2.2 Greater focus on synthesis of grammar and content	7
2.3 Incorporate a more chronological focus on culture	7
2.4 Enable a more creative and critical approach to narrating the legends.....	7
3. Goals for the benchmark portfolio	7
3.1 Gauge success of revision	7
3.2 Identify areas for further improvement	7
3.3 Communicate the rationale for the revisions to colleagues.....	8
4. Teaching methods used during class	8
4.1 <i>La pregunta del día</i> (“The question of the day”)	8
4.2 Cultural background to legends.....	9
4.3 In-class presentation and discussion of legends.....	10
4.4 Grammar review and practice	10
4.5 Small group speaking activities.....	10
4.6 In-class compositions.....	10
4.7 Quizzes, review sessions and exams.....	10
4.7.1 Quizzes	10
4.7.2 In-class review sessions.....	11
4.7.3 Exams	11
4.8 Final interview.....	12
4.9 Participation rubrics.....	12
4.10 Use of Spanish vs. English in the classroom.....	12
5. Out-of-class activities.....	13
5.1 Voice recording of Composition #3 and #4.....	13

5.2 Final film project	13
5.3 Voluntary extra-credit opportunities.....	13
6. Course materials	13
6.1 <i>Leyendas</i> textbook	13
6.1.1 “ <i>Los amantes de Teruel</i> ” (“The lovers of Teruel”)	13
6.1.2 “ <i>La Llorona</i> ” (“The Weeping Woman”).....	15
6.1.3 “ <i>El año que llovieron tortillas</i> ” (“The Year that it Rained Tortillas”).....	15
6.1.4 “ <i>La yerba mate</i> ” (“Yerba Mate”).....	16
6.2 Breaking Out of Beginner’s Spanish.....	17
6.3 Course packet.....	17
6.4 PowerPoint presentations of historico-cultural background information	18
6.5 PowerPoint presentations over grammar topics.....	18
6.6 <i>Cortometrajes</i> (short films) and film clips.....	18
6.6.1 Braveheart.....	18
6.6.2 “Tears and Tortillas”	18
6.6.3 El secreto de sus ojos	19
6.6.4 “ <i>Día de los muertos</i> ” (“The Day of the Dead”).....	20
6.6.5 “Feast”	20
6.7 Songs	21
6.7.1 “ <i>Cuándo los ángeles lloran</i> ” (“When the Angels Cry”)	21
6.7.2 “ <i>A Dios le pido</i> ” (“I Ask of God”)	21
7. Links to the broader curriculum.....	22
7.1. Links to the overall Spanish program.....	22
7.2 Links to other courses	23
8. Selected evidence of student understanding and progress toward learning goals	23
8.1 Overall course grades.....	23
8.2 Quizzes and exams.....	24
8.2.1 Quizzes	24
8.2.2 Unit exams	24
8.2.3. Extra credit questions on exams.....	24
8.3 Final interview.....	25
8.4 Final film project	25
9. Student self-assessment of learning progress	25

9.1 Growth in mastery of Spanish grammar	25
9.2 Growth in knowledge of history and cultures of the Spanish-speaking world.....	26
9.3 Ability to read in Spanish	27
9.4 Ability to understand spoken Spanish	27
9.5 Ability to write in Spanish	27
9.6 Ability to speak Spanish	28
9.7 Balance of Spanish and English spoken by the professor	28
9.8 Balance of Spanish and English spoken by self	29
10. Student evaluation of course components.....	29
10.1 <i>Leyendas</i> textbook	29
10.2 Breaking Out of Beginner’s Spanish.....	29
10.3 Course packet	30
10.4 PowerPoint presentations of historico-cultural background information	30
10.5 PowerPoint presentations over grammar topics.....	30
10.6 <i>Cortometrajes</i> (short films) and film clips.....	30
10.7 Songs	30
10.8 Individual compositions	31
10.9 Collaborative compositions with audio recording	31
10.10 Final video project.....	32
10.11 Class discussions and activities	32
10.12 <i>La pregunta del día</i> (“Question of the day”).....	32
11. Future directions for the SPAN202 curricular revision	32
11.1 Further revisions	33
11.2 Building capacity and winning the investment of other instructors in the Basic Spanish Program.....	33
11.3 Other courses in the sequence	33

1. Description of Spanish 202: Intermediate Spanish II (Focus on Literature and Culture)

1.1 Content area

Spanish 202: Intermediate Spanish II (SPAN202) is part of the Basic Spanish Program at the University of Nebraska – Lincoln (UNL). It is the final course in a four-semester sequence (101, 102, 201 and 202). The previous three courses in the sequence cover introductory Spanish, presenting vocabulary and the basic verb conjugations. SPAN202 is intended to help students synthesize this knowledge and begin to apply it more proficiently toward specific content areas.

UNL's program offers three different focus areas for SPAN202. There are dedicated sections targeted toward Spanish in professional settings (Focus on Medicine and Focus on Business), of which one or two are typically offered each semester. The majority of students taking SPAN202 take the more general Focus on Literature and Culture. In some ways this is the default course while the other two foci attract a self-selected population; however, in practice, student enrollment decisions at this level often have as much to do with scheduling and availability as with interest. Furthermore, many students thinking of majoring or minoring in Spanish are explicitly interested in a literature- and culture-focused course.

1.2 Student population

SPAN202 is a challenging course due to the heterogeneous student population that takes it. On the one hand, it is the course that completes the six-credit-hour second year sequence in fulfillment of UNL's College of Arts and Sciences (CAS) language requirement a mix. Therefore, a significant subset of SPAN202 students take it for that reason and may lack broader motivation to develop proficiency in Spanish. On the other hand, many first-year students who have excelled in Spanish in secondary school place into SPAN202 and take it intending to continue studying Spanish, with a view to studying abroad and/or completing a major or minor.

Furthermore, whether they come to SPAN202 through UNL's Basic Spanish sequence or from a high school program, students may or may not be accustomed to classes conducted mostly or entirely in the target language; they may or may not have previous experience reading target-language texts of more than a paragraph or two; and they may or may not have practice generating spontaneous spoken discourse in the target language (i.e. constructing full sentences and paragraphs to communicate their own ideas, as opposed to responding to others' discourse with words or short phrases.) Consequently, the students in any given section present a widely divergent array of preparation, existing target-language proficiency and motivation.

1.3 Place in curriculum

SPAN202 completes the four-semester Basic Spanish Program sequence and serves as a transition to the Intermediate Composition and Intermediate Conversation courses, which in turn are a gateway to the more advanced courses of the Spanish major. Spanish 101, 102 and 201 focus on the acquisition of basic vocabulary and grammar. Like most introductory college-level Spanish courses, they consist of a series of thematic units based on textbook chapters. Each chapter covers topically-related vocabulary and presents a series of grammar points in the context of the chapter theme.

SPAN202 includes a review of grammar; however, its stated goal according to the syllabus is as follows:

This course is designed to move you away from knowledge about the language and expertise in using isolated skills into a practical and fluid use of the language in which you synthesize your isolated skills.

The literature- and culture-focused sections of SPAN202 use short stories, specifically legends and folktales from across the Spanish-speaking world, to contextualize grammar points and help students synthesize grammar with content. For students who continue to the major, SPAN202 serves as an introduction to literature: in addition to grammatical proficiency and vocabulary building, students develop the skills of basic literary analysis through practice with (comparatively) short-form texts. Students also acquire historical and cultural background knowledge to help them to interpret the stories and appreciate the differences between the cultural environments and historical periods that produced the tales and their own contemporary experience.

1.4 Description of course as it existed through Fall 2014

SPAN202 comprised five legends from the *Leyendas* textbook (chosen for the sake of geographical representation and described in greater detail in Benchmark Memo 2) paired with a review of Spanish verb conjugations, beginning with the present indicative (Unit 1) and moving through the past tense forms of the preterite and imperfect (Unit 2), present perfect indicative and past perfect indicative (Unit 3), the simple and perfect forms of the future and conditional (Unit 4), and, in the final unit, formal and informal imperatives as well as all forms and tenses of the subjunctive. Additional challenging grammatical topics such as prepositions and object pronouns were also addressed.

1.4.1 Stated vs. actual roles of grammar in the course

Although synthesis of skills in practical and fluid language use (as stated above) has long been the stated objective of SPAN202, in practice it has been dominated by a similar one-by-one focus on isolated skills. In part this has been due to the very uneven degree of preparation and disparities in proficiency among SPAN202 and the perceived needs to help the weaker students catch up and to cover the full conjugation paradigm.

1.4.2 Objective of written and oral summaries

In the previous iteration of SPAN202, compositions took the form of written or oral retellings of the legends. On the syllabus, the summaries were described as follows:

Retelling stories over the semester will demonstrate language growth. In the beginning, with *“Los cadejos”*, you will be asked to retell the main events of the story in very simple terms and in the present tense. With the next story, *“La yerba mate”*, you will retell the story in the past, adding some details about the setting and characters. In *“El año que llovieron tortillas”*, the plot is not easily discerned and you will learn to read between the lines to piece the action together in a group retelling. *“La llorona”* will be retold orally as well as written. The final legend, *“Los amantes de Teruel”*, will be retold and reinterpreted in a creative way. To demonstrate your understanding of legends, you will create a short movie in which you reenact a legend, taking into account the details and culture of the country of origin.

The course packet contained activities aimed toward helping students memorize phrases from the stories, with a view toward building their capacity to retell the stories.

2. Goals for the course

I taught SPAN202 for the first time in Fall 2014, following the existing syllabus. This gave me the opportunity to familiarize myself with the course, see what went well and what caused confusion or difficulty, and identify areas for potential improvement. The primary focus of my revision was to improve the materials and activities included in the curriculum. The most important change I made was to reduce the total number of legends covered from five to four in an effort to slow down the somewhat frantic pace and allow more time for synthesis and assimilation of the material. I also removed or greatly de-emphasized some of the less essential grammar topics in order to privilege others. My goal was, on one hand, to reduce the quantity of material that SPAN202 attempted to cover, and on the other hand to intensify the level of challenge and the practicality of the included materials – in other words, to focus heavily on the forms that were most essential for enabling students to communicate proficiently and strive to help them develop a deep conceptual understanding of these facets of the language.

2.1 Change sequence of grammar review

As a result of the emphasis on covering the entire conjugation paradigm, a disproportionate amount of class time was dedicated to low-frequency forms such as the conditional perfect (“[*subject*] would have [*verb*]ed”) and future perfect (“[*subject*] will have [*verb*]ed”). Of greater concern to me as a curriculum designer was the distribution of topics, with a large number of very difficult grammar points in the final unit of the semester. Knowing the tendency for students’ attention to wane and their time management to suffer during the final part of the term, and aware of the danger this arrangement posed for instructors who might fall behind schedule, I chose this course for the Peer Review of Teaching Project in part as an opportunity to reevaluate the grammatical component and its sequencing.

At the intermediate level, there are two grammar topics in particular that demand sustained attention and practice: preterite/imperfect contrast and the subjunctive. On the American Council for the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency scale used for rating the Oral Proficiency Interview (OPI), one of the most widely-accepted measures of proficiency, these are the two key markers that distinguish intermediate and advanced speakers. They are challenging for native English speakers to acquire because they do not readily correspond to any specific English structures; English does not overtly mark aspect or mood on verbs. I wished to reorganize the SPAN202 curriculum so that students would go over these topics in the first unit of the semester (rather than at the end, as with the subjunctive in the previous iteration) and then revisit them in each subsequent unit, receiving additional opportunities to analyze and practice the forms in new contexts.

This leads to my other goal for grammar instruction: to help students develop a deeper conceptual understanding of Spanish grammar as compared with English. Although the syllabus mentions moving students *away* from knowledge *about* grammar, I know from my own experience as a non-native speaker that, in spite of having attained a high degree of proficiency, it was only by acquiring a deeper conceptual understanding of Spanish grammar that I was able to resolve my doubts about certain liminal examples that still caused me to question my intuitions. This conceptual knowledge would also help students to analyze certain details of the legends that hinged on interpreting grammatical subtleties.

2.2 Greater focus on synthesis of grammar and content

In addition to reorganizing the sequence of SPAN202's grammatical component, I also sought to more closely and explicitly link the grammar topics to the texts of the legends and to meaningful communicative contexts. I developed a series of activities (discussed in greater detail in Benchmark Memo 2) that obligated students to engage productively with the grammar topics in order to discuss the content of a number of short films, film clips and target-language songs. In these activities, students moved beyond sentence-level practice to more extended discourse employing the targeted grammar points.

2.3 Incorporate a more chronological focus on culture

Another goal of the curricular revision I undertook as part of the PRTP was to incorporate a more chronological focus on culture. By changing the order of the legends to begin with a tale from medieval Spain and move through the Spanish Conquest of the territories in the New World, I could build a much greater degree of continuity into the historico-cultural component and, hopefully, enable a deeper degree of understanding of the legends themselves by giving students a more complete grasp of their underpinnings.

2.4 Enable a more creative and critical approach to narrating the legends

In the paragraph about synthesizing isolated language skills, the syllabus for the existing version of SPAN202 states that "the culmination of these skills will be expressed in writing summaries of the legends." Although I appreciate the arrangement of increasing task difficulty in the description of the written and oral summaries (cited above), I question whether simply retelling the legends is the most worthwhile "culmination" of these skills. Although it offers the opportunity to demonstrate comprehension and grammatical mastery, summarizing a story is not necessarily a particularly useful language skill.

Because a course focused on literature tends to privilege reading and more formal registers of language use, I wished to incorporate more opportunities to practice conversational speaking in the course. To that end, I adapted the compositions: instead of summaries and retellings of the legends, I wanted students to imagine the conversations that would have taken place between the characters and write dialogues. This would enable students to experiment with developing different "voices" in the target language and practice various discourse modes.

3. Goals for the benchmark portfolio

3.1 Gauge success of revision

My main goal for this portfolio is to assess the effectiveness of the various curricular changes I implemented in SPAN202 during the Spring 2015 pilot by analyzing a variety of data and evidence (described in greater detail in Benchmark Memo 2).

3.2 Identify areas for further improvement

Although my PRTP is complete as of June 2015, my curricular revisions are not. In my role as program coordinator, I am constantly evaluating curriculum and looking for ways to improve it. In

assessing the effectiveness of the changes I made during the Spring 2015 semester, I am aware that some of the changes succeeded in improving the course, while other improvements remain to be made.

3.3 Communicate the rationale for the revisions to colleagues

Another major motivation for writing the Benchmark Portfolio is to communicate the details of the curricular revision and its rationale to my colleagues. I am well aware that some of the challenges I experienced with the SPAN202 curriculum during Fall 2014 were the result of teaching with someone else's materials for the first time. Correspondingly, I can expect that many of my colleagues (some of whom have been teaching the extant SPAN202 curriculum for a long time and who are quite happy with it) might find it difficult to adjust to the rearranged sequence and may struggle to incorporate some of my materials. Everyone who creates curricular materials does so in the way that is most intuitive for him or her, and there are almost always elements that the author takes for granted but that may not be immediately clear to others. I hope that this portfolio is useful to my colleagues in helping them to understand the revision and adopt the changes when they next teach the course.

4. Teaching methods used during class

Spanish 202: Intermediate Spanish II (SPAN202) is a three-credit lecture course that typically meets three days per week for 50 minutes. Enrollment is capped at 25 students per section. During the Spring 2015 semester there were a total of seven sections of SPAN202. Two of these sections had a focus on Medicine, leaving five sections focused on Literature and Culture. I piloted the curriculum revision described in this portfolio in two of the sections; the remaining three were taught by other instructors using the existing (i.e. unrevised, apart from updates to the course packet) curriculum.

Some of the elements described in this memo (the revised sequence of legends and grammar topics, the revised course packet, the compositions, the exams, the final interview and video project, etc.) are destined to be shared across all future Literature and Culture sections of this course. Others (the PowerPoint presentations, the activities with film clips and songs) will be made available to other instructors via Blackboard; they will be encouraged but not obligated to make use of them, and if they have other preferred activities for teaching a grammar point or culture lesson they will not be prohibited from using those. A few of the elements are part of my individual classroom approach (*la pregunta del día*, the two-way communication on participation rubrics) and may or may not be adopted by other instructors, but I hope that this Benchmark Portfolio makes them available to my colleagues and facilitates their integration into other instructors' versions of SPAN202.

4.1 *La pregunta del día* ("The question of the day")

La pregunta del día is part of my opening routine at the start of nearly every class hour. It consists of an authentic question (i.e. a question to which I do not already know the answer, as opposed to a display question, i.e. one to which the teacher knows the answer and which is used as a comprehension check) that each student answers for him- or herself: often they are questions about personal experiences or preferences, designed to help the class members get to know one another.

Another key goal of the *pregunta del día* is to help students learn their classmates' names: after each student answers, he or she has to choose the next person to answer, calling them by name (and

asking their name in Spanish if they don't know it; additionally, they have to pass the turn to a different classmate every day, so eventually they have to learn everyone else's name). Research in the field of group dynamics (Dörnyei 2001; Dörnyei & Murphey 2003; Ehrman & Dörnyei 1998) emphasizes the importance of group members learning names and getting to know one another as individuals in order to coalesce as a cohesive group. In a foreign language class, this is critically important for fostering an environment that encourages interaction in the target language. It is difficult enough for students to communicate with one another imperfectly in a foreign language when they share a native language; it is an unavoidably artificial communicative situation, but a necessary one in foreign language classroom. Compounding it, however, is the cultural taboo against talking to strangers. Requiring students to learn each other's names is an essential first step toward breaking the ice and building a community of individuals willing to talk to one another.

Finally, *la pregunta del día* frequently targets and contextualizes the grammar points studied in the course. For example, when the conditional and the imperfect subjunctive (used to articulate hypotheticals) are in focus, the *pregunta del día* is something along the lines of "What **would** you [**verb**] if you [**verb**]?", for example, "What would you do if you won the lottery?" etc. This gives the students an opportunity to apply the grammar to talking about their own lives in casual conversation with their classmates. Frequently, it also leads them to reveal information that can then be tied back into the class discussion later in the hour or during a future class meeting, as relevant to the topic at hand.

4.2 Cultural background to legends

I began the semester with some general introductory material to prepare students to discuss target-language literature and culture. I prepared a PowerPoint presentation reviewing (and providing Spanish vocabulary for) story structure and elements. This provided a framework that was revisited with each legend, helping students orient to the material and giving them a foothold to begin discussing it. Reminding students to identify the story elements is particularly helpful for novice readers in a foreign language, for whom mere decoding of the text may not always be successful. Going through the story elements is a basic comprehension check which can then serve as a springboard for more sophisticated discussions.

Another introductory point was a discussion of the "iceberg model" of culture and the role of cultural perspectives in shaping interpretation. We talked about the surface aspects of "Culture" typically studied in introductory language classes (i.e. art and music, cuisines, holiday traditions) compared to the deeper aspects of "small-c culture" that shape perspectives, world views and way of life. I used a visual analogy of putting on a pair of sunglasses to show how adopting a different culture's perspective subtly alters the way you see things, and that a bilingual person acquires the ability to look at something through both their native and adopted cultural perspectives and, at times, to become aware of important cultural disconnects.

As we moved through the four units, I created PowerPoint presentations describing the historico-cultural background for each story, which we discussed in class prior to reading the legends. The presentations gave a historical narrative that contextualized the stories and connected them to one another; they also identified key cultural points that students were unlikely to already know and which they very much needed to understand in order to fully and correctly interpret elements of the legends that otherwise would be highly confusing. These PowerPoints were subsequently made available to students through Blackboard.

4.3 In-class presentation and discussion of legends

For each legend, I created a PowerPoint presentation walking students through the identification of the various story elements and highlighting how the aforementioned cultural aspects related to the events in the story and the behaviors and motivations of the characters. These PowerPoints were subsequently made available to students through Blackboard.

4.4 Grammar review and practice

In-class grammar practice took several forms. I tried very hard to avoid using class time to “teach grammar” in the sense of giving comprehensive presentations about how to conjugate verbs; at the 202 level, presumably students should already know this (although in reality many of them did not) or at least be able to review the material independently if they needed a refresher. Instead, I gave a very brief overview of each grammar point on the first few slides of a PowerPoint presentation and then quickly moved into contextualized examples of how the grammar point was used in the legend of the present unit. These PowerPoints were subsequently made available to students through Blackboard.

Another approach to contextualized grammar practice that I used frequently was to show a short film or a clip, occasionally from a target-language feature film but often I opted for a clip with little or no dialogue. I then presented students with activities that required them to use the targeted grammar to narrate or describe the events of the film. These are described in greater detail in [Section 6.6](#) below. I conducted similar activities with songs, described in [Section 6.7](#).

4.5 Small group speaking activities

Throughout the semester, speaking activities that required students to engage in conversation with their peers were an essential part of the day-to-day activities of the class and the primary means for students to practice and improve their spoken Spanish. Most of the class activities, including the aforementioned films and songs as well as activities drawn from the course packet, were completed by students working in pairs or groups and speaking out loud, (ideally) using their Spanish to the best of their abilities.

4.6 In-class compositions

For each legend and unit, the students completed a written composition in class. They were given a choice of 2-3 scenes from the story and asked to dramatize them, imagining the conversation between the characters and creating dialogue for them. Students were also given direction to incorporate relevant grammar points as appropriate to each topic. The first two compositions were completed individually; the third and fourth were collaborative and students were required to make a sound recording of the dialogue afterward, to practice pronunciation, intonation and expressivity in the target language.

4.7 Quizzes, review sessions and exams

4.7.1 Quizzes

SPAN202 included a total of ten 10-point quizzes.

4.7.1.1 Design of quizzes 1-5

Five of the quizzes focused on grammar and gave students a very clear preview of what the associated exam section would look like. The exam sections for these grammar points followed an

identical format and merely changed the surface details. Students were informed of this so that they could use their quiz performance as an accurate gauge of how, and how much, to prepare for that portion of the exam.

4.7.1.2 Design of quizzes 6-7

Quizzes 6 and 7 had a more analytical orientation (they were very similar to the extra-credit exam questions described below in [Section 4.7.3.1](#)). Students were presented with a quote from the text of one of the legends, asked to identify the grammatical forms highlighted therein and explain why those forms were appropriate to that particular context. These quizzes were given at the end of the semester and used as evidence of learning for this Benchmark Portfolio in Memo 3.

4.7.1.3 Design of quizzes 8-10

Quizzes 8, 9 and 10 were given at the end of the semester. They constituted a relatively detailed evaluation of course materials (Quiz 8) and self-assessment of grammar and content learning (Quiz 9) and development in linguistic proficiency (Quiz 10). These quizzes were graded on a completion basis and the results are discussed in Benchmark Memo 3.

4.7.2 In-class review sessions

Prior to each Unit exam, one class day was devoted to in-class review. Students had the opportunity to request any clarification they needed on grammar or content, and were then given the opportunity to practice with additional activities (usually grammar-focused and drawn from the course packet). While the use of Spanish for classroom interaction was always strongly encouraged, on review days this was slightly relaxed for the question-and-answer portion of the hour.

4.7.3 Exams

The SPAN202 curricular revision maintained the same general use of exams insofar as that each unit culminated in an in-class written exam over the legend, related history and culture, and associated grammar points; it also included an optional comprehensive final exam that students could choose to take in an attempt to replace their lowest unit exam grade. However, significant revisions were made to exam design.

4.7.3.1 Adjustments to exam design

In the previous iteration of SPAN202, the exams were largely discrete-point convergent exams (i.e. each question had one and only one correct answer). Question types such as matching, multiple-choice, and fill-in-the-blank/cloze passages predominated.

As part of fostering communicative competence in the curriculum revision, I sought to reframe the evaluations in a more communicative vein as well. I approached them as creating opportunities for students to show me what they know and can do, rather than an attempt to ferret out gaps in their knowledge. I incorporated a greater degree of divergence in the exams: many sections had multiple possible correct answers, and many sections had more questions than students were required to answer, allowing them to choose the questions they felt best prepared to answer. Students could “hedge their bets” by answering more than the minimum, knowing that they would be given credit for their best responses. In effect, the exams were designed to allow students to earn points for correct answers more so than to lose them for incorrect ones.

I began by writing more open-ended grammar sections and contextualizing them with the same film clips students had previously seen during their class activities. For example, on one exam students viewed a short film and were given a list of infinitive (i.e. unconjugated) verbs from which to choose. They were instructed to write ten past-tense sentences describing the film, with a minimum of four in the preterite and four in the imperfect, demonstrating that they could correctly employ those forms to show verbal aspect. They could choose any relevant verbs (including verbs not listed) but could use each verb only once.

In other sections I continued to use discrete-point, convergent question types such as fill-in-the-blanks and cloze passages, but I also offered more questions than students were asked to answer, allowing them to choose among options. For example, the history and culture portion of the exam generally consisted of 7-8 short-answer questions (worth 3 points apiece) from which students were required to answer five. They could also earn partial credit for responses that demonstrated a degree of understanding that fell short of mastery.

The exams also included an extra-credit question at the end that highlighted a quote from the text and asked students to analyze its grammar. These were challenging examples in which the grammar was tricky to interpret and demanded “reading between the lines” to a degree that would be difficult for most students at the 200-level.

4.8 Final interview

At the end of the semester, each student completed a one-on-one interview with me in the target language in which they answered questions about the various legends we read (questions about content, comprehension and interpretation as well as the students’ subjective reactions) and questions about their experiences studying Spanish, their future plans and other similar topics (many of which they had practiced throughout the semester when answering *las preguntas del día*). They also had an in-class opportunity to practice peer interviews with a subset of the actual interview questions a few days ahead of time.

4.9 Participation rubrics

Another of my classroom rituals implemented in the SPAN202 revision was two-way communication about class participation using the grading rubric. In a classroom centered around pair and group conversation activities, it is impossible for the instructor to observe every student’s participation at all times. In order to get a more complete picture of individual participation, I handed out copies of the rubric every Friday and instructed students to write on the back and tell me anything they wanted me to know about their participation during the past week (i.e. what total percentage of Spanish vs. English they had spoken, how they participated in groups, etc.) Although it took students a week or two to catch on, over the course of the semester the participation rubrics became a very helpful way for students to communicate with me, ask questions and seek assistance, on matters pertaining to participation as well as other aspects of the course.

4.10 Use of Spanish vs. English in the classroom

In many university foreign-language departments, “100% target-language use in the classroom” is held (sometimes uncritically) as the gold standard best practice for instruction. When circumstances are favorable, 100% target-language instruction is a wonderful teaching tool, but skilled practitioners also need to recognize that in many circumstances a modified policy may be more appropriate.

At the beginning of the semester, I informed my students that my goal would be to use 90-95% Spanish myself, and that I would like to see them aim for 50% Spanish at the beginning of the semester and build toward 75-80% Spanish down the road. It quickly became evident during some of the introductory discussions about culture and story structure that a subset of the students lacked the necessary proficiency to follow the discussion, and so I increased the proportion of English at first. Over the course of the semester I adopted an approach of using Spanish to talk about history, culture and the content of the legends; on days that we worked with grammar, I included more English to clarify underlying concepts.

5. Out-of-class activities

5.1 Voice recording of Composition #3 and #4

After writing compositions #3 and #4 collaboratively in class, students met outside of class to make a sound recording of their dialogue.

5.2 Final film project

At the end of the semester, students were divided into groups of 4-5 to create a film interpretation of one of the legends. They chose a text, selected the scenes they wished to portray, wrote a script and filmed and edited a video (4-5 minutes) of their scene. The videos were screened as a “film festival” on the last day of class.

5.3 Voluntary extra-credit opportunities

Students were given the opportunity to earn up to 10 points of extra credit (1% of the total semester grade) by participating in “extra” activities such as attending the Spanish Conversation Table or seeing a target-language film and writing a summary.

6. Course materials

6.1 *Leyendas* textbook

The main course text is *Leyendas del mundo hispano*, 3rd ed. (Bacon & Bikandi-Mejías, 2009). All four legends covered in SPAN202 are drawn from this text.

6.1.1 “*Los amantes de Teruel*” (“The lovers of Teruel”)

6.1.1.1 *Synopsis of story*

Set in Teruel, Aragon during the thirteenth century, in the midst of the *Reconquista* when Christian Spain was at war with the Moors, *Los amantes de Teruel* is a tragic love story in the mode of *Romeo & Juliet*. Isabel de Segura, daughter of a wealthy family, loves Juan de Marcilla but her father refuses to allow her to marry someone from a poor background. Juan sets off to win his fortune, making a pact with Isabel that he will return in five years to marry her, and she vows to wait for him. At the end

of the five years, under pressure from her father, Isabel marries a wealthy suitor, don Rodrigo. That very night Juan returns to Teruel, learns of Isabel's marriage, and hides in the bridal chamber, confronting her after her new husband has fallen asleep. Desperate, he begs for a kiss, which she refuses to give; Juan dies at her feet of a broken heart. At that moment don Rodrigo wakes up; Isabel tells him she had a frightening dream about her friend. She then tells the story about what just happened with Juan as though it happened to her friend in the dream. She asks don Rodrigo what he thinks, and he replies that her friend was a fool and should have kissed her lover. "Foolish, yes, perhaps, but honorable!" she retorts, and shows him Juan's body. The two of them remove it to his family's doorstep. The next day, at Juan's funeral, Isabel collapses and dies of a broken heart and the two lovers are buried together.

6.1.1.2 Cultural components

This story is difficult for contemporary students of intermediate Spanish to assimilate on a number of levels. First, they need to understand the rigidity of class structure in medieval Spain, how difficult it was to ascend the social ladder, and how the *Reconquista* offered the one possibility for some (male) Spaniards to transcend their social class. They also need to understand the nuances of honor and its loss, and the dire consequences for women in particular. Additionally, they need to be informed that in this society the consummation of a marriage was critically important and the point at which it became irrevocable. They need to be made aware of the deliberate vagueness of the text on this point and be helped to realize what they are meant to infer: that the marriage of Isabel and Rodrigo had been consummated, and therefore to kiss Juan would have been a betrayal of her honor.

Contemporary students have great difficulty accepting this interpretation. Acclimated to the Disney versions of fairy tales and steeped in a culture that glorifies independence and rebellion against authority, they find the denial of a climactic kiss highly unsatisfying. *Los amantes de Teruel* challenges their worldview by asking them to see Isabel as a heroic figure for her obedience and her resistance to temptation, and to accept that the couple earns the "happy ending" of eternal togetherness that they failed to attain on earth.

6.1.1.3 Grammatical components

In this unit, the revised curriculum introduces the past tense aspectual contrast of preterite and imperfect right away. It also introduces formal commands as a segue into the present subjunctive. As previously mentioned, these forms will be the subject of ongoing focus throughout the course.

6.1.1.4 Pedagogical considerations

Los amantes de Teruel is arguably the most challenging of the stories included in SPAN202 and thus it is an odd choice to begin the semester. It is temporally and culturally distant from students' experiences, and the language reflects this: though it is not truly archaic, it uses ornate syntax that evokes its time period and challenges the intermediate-proficiency reader.

However, in other respects it works very well as an introductory text for the course. It opens a conversation about the *Reconquista* and the interplay of religion in Spain's history that will become relevant for subsequent legends. It also opens the way to discuss when Spain began to exist as a political entity, and what Iberian society was like prior to that point. Furthermore, it sets up a framework for understanding gender relations and social class structures that students will draw on to interpret the next two legends in the course.

6.1.2 “*La Llorona*” (“The Weeping Woman”)

6.1.2.1 *Synopsis of story*

“*La Llorona*” is a well-known Mexican ghost story about a beautiful young *mestiza* (mixed-blood) woman, Luisa, who falls in love with a wealthy and handsome Spaniard, don Nuño. Against her father’s protestations that a noble Spaniard would never lower himself to marry her, doña Luisa becomes his mistress. She bears him three children, always hoping that he will finally agree to make her his wife, but instead he seems to grow tired of her. One fateful night, doña Luisa goes to his family’s opulent home where a fabulous party is taking place. She learns that they are celebrating don Nuño’s engagement to a wealthy Spanish heiress. Mad with grief, she returns home and murders the children in a jealous rage. Doña Luisa is executed for her crimes, and her ghost is forced to wander the land as *la Llorona* crying out for her lost children.

6.1.2.2 *Cultural components*

This legend builds on the gender and class relations introduced with *Los amantes de Teruel*. Instead of an obedient heroine who protects her honor, we now see a rebellious daughter who makes the daring and risky decision to sacrifice her honor for love – and pays a steep price. *La Llorona* also sets the scene for discussion of the Spanish Conquest of Latin America (and specifically Hernán Cortés’ invasion of Mexico and defeat of the Aztec empire with a few hundred men). *La Llorona* is also closely connected to the historical figure La Malinche, the indigenous interpreter who became Cortés’ mistress and the mother of the first *mestizo* child born in the Americas. An additional connection, particularly well-timed for fall semesters, is the discussion of *El día de los muertos* (“Day of the Dead”) and the superimposition of Catholic religious traditions with extant pre-Colombian indigenous beliefs.

6.1.2.3 *Grammatical components*

In this unit students continue to practice the preterite/imperfect contrast. They are also introduced to the future, the conditional, and the imperfect subjunctive.

6.1.2.4 *Pedagogical considerations*

In this unit, students sometimes find it difficult to separate the three major female figures discussed: *La Llorona*, the character in the legend; *La Malinche*, the real-life historical figure who nonetheless represents problematized motherhood; and *Cihuacoatl*, the Aztec goddess who was said to appear at night, wandering and wailing in the streets of Tenochtitlán prior to Cortés’ arrival. Some students also find the darkness and violence of this story off-putting.

6.1.3 “*El año que llovieron tortillas*” (“The Year that it Rained Tortillas”)

6.1.3.1 *Synopsis of story*

This is a story about a poor peasant, Juan, and his clever (but anonymous) wife who live in an isolated, mountainous region of New Mexico. One day while out gathering firewood, Juan discovers a mysterious wooden box and brings it home to his wife. She waits until she is alone to open it and discovers a treasure of gold and silver coins. She hides the box away and goes to the village, buys a large supply of flour and butter, and sets to work making a copious amount of tortillas. That night she and Juan eat dinner outdoors on the patio. Mid-meal she excuses herself, saying that she has to run to the neighbors’ for a quick errand, and she climbs up on to the roof of the house and flings the tortillas down on an astonished Juan. When she returns, he exclaims that it was raining tortillas and she responds,

“You see? Now we have so much food, you don’t need to go to the mountains in search of firewood any more. Tomorrow you are going to school!”

The next day she enrolls Juan in school. He makes a valiant but ultimately fruitless attempt to learn, eventually rebelling and returning to the mountains to gather firewood. One day a couple of men approach him and ask if he has seen a box they had left there a few months ago. “Yes!” exclaims Juan, and he eagerly leads them home and shouts to his wife to give them the box. “What box are you talking about, dear?” she asks innocently, with a touch of confusion. “The box, the box! You remember – the box I brought home when I was going to school!” “But dear, you are old, you don’t go to school.” “The box I brought home the year that it rained tortillas!” The two men marched off in disgust, convinced that they had been led up the garden path by a senile old fool. The elderly couple kept the treasure and lived out their days in peace and happiness.

6.1.3.2 Cultural components

On the surface, this appears to be a somewhat funny but rather shallow tale about a stupid man with a smart wife who succeeds in tricking everybody to keep the treasure. However, the story is rich with allegorical references to the history of crypto-Jews: communities of Spanish Jews who were driven underground by the Inquisition and, in some cases, hid their identities for centuries, so deeply that some of them no longer even remembered they were Jewish, although they maintained some of the traditions and practices in modified form.

This story lays the groundwork for discussing the Spanish Inquisition and its effects in both peninsular Spain and the new world. It is also an excellent opportunity to point out symbolism and demonstrate its role in literary interpretation.

6.1.3.3 Grammatical components

In this unit students practice the present perfect and pluperfect and the persistent matter of *ser* vs. *estar* (the two verbs that both translate as “to be” but have very different implications).

3.1.3.4 Pedagogical considerations

The biggest challenge for students in understanding *El año que llovieron tortillas* is identifying and interpreting the text’s many symbolic allusions to the couple’s crypto-Jewish identity.

6.1.4 “La yerba mate” (“Yerba Mate”)

6.1.4.1 Synopsis of story

Yerba mate is a plant whose dried leaves are brewed to make an herbal tea (*mate*) that is a foundational element of social interaction throughout the Southern Cone. “*La yerba mate*” is a tale from indigenous South American mythology that explains the origin of this plant. Yací, the moon goddess, was tired of only seeing the world dimly, by night. She asked her friend Araí, the cloud, to show her what it looked like in daytime. The two goddesses assumed the forms of mortal women (thereby temporarily losing their supernatural powers) and began exploring the land. They were so enthralled by all the sights that they did not see a jaguar that was about to pounce on them until the very moment it attacked. Fortunately, they were rescued by an Indian who had seen the animal preparing to spring and who shot it with an arrow just in time. The two women instantly disappeared, resuming their divine forms, but that night they appeared to the Indian in a dream, thanking him and telling him that when he awoke he

would find a plant growing by his door as a sign of their gratitude. He was to toast the leaves and brew a beverage with them which would be a sign of friendship and companionship for all who shared it.

6.1.4.2 Cultural components

This story focuses on an aspect of how interpersonal relationships are enacted in a particular region of the Spanish-speaking world, in a way that is likely to be unfamiliar and possibly off-putting to Americans. It opens the door to discussion about deeply-held, “bottom-of-the-iceberg” cultural beliefs about hygiene and intimacy, and how offers of hospitality can be misunderstood and offense inadvertently given when such cultural assumptions do not align.

6.1.4.3 Grammatical components

Direct and indirect object pronouns, separately and in combination, are the main grammatical focus of this unit, alongside the ongoing practice with preterite/imperfect contrast and the subjunctive.

6.1.4.4 Pedagogical considerations

Linguistically and conceptually this is probably the easiest of the four stories. Placing it at the end of the semester may seem counterintuitive; however, it also eases the cognitive burden on students at the busiest and most stressful time of the semester and allows them to enjoy a fuller sense of mastery over the material than they may have experienced with the previous legends.

6.2 Breaking Out of Beginner’s Spanish

I included Joseph J. Keenan’s *Breaking Out of Beginner’s Spanish* (1994, 2015) as a supplement to the *Leyendas* text. This volume is written in English and aimed at English-speaking learners of Spanish as a second language. It addresses common mistakes and challenges faced by that demographic in building speaking proficiency, with engaging humor.

Although the material in this book is extremely useful to students at this level, incorporating this text effectively in the SPAN202 curriculum is an ongoing challenge. Its chapters do not necessarily fit neatly within the units built around the legends, and the book as a whole does not lend itself easily to inclusion on the exams. Its greatest use thus far is helping students enliven their dialogues with more appropriate conversational expressions. One of my continuing objectives for SPAN202 is to incorporate this text more fully into the curriculum.

6.3 Course packet

A number of years ago a colleague of mine, who coordinated the Spanish program at the time, developed an in-house supplement of grammar review materials and practice activities to coordinate with the legends in the previous SPAN202 syllabus. The packet was in need of revision; some activities had become dated, others would benefit from clarification and additional context, and there were disagreements about the wording of some questions, based on dialectal variations across Spanish-speaking countries.

When I rearranged the syllabus, I undertook a simultaneous overhaul of the course packet. I rearranged the sections, updated and clarified activities where necessary and adjusted the layout in an effort to make the entire packet more cohesive and easier to navigate. The continual improvement of this coursepacket is another of my ongoing goals for the curricular revision of SPAN202.

6.4 PowerPoint presentations of historico-cultural background information

See Section 4.2 for a more detailed description of this element.

6.5 PowerPoint presentations over grammar topics

See Section 4.4 for a more detailed description of this element.

6.6 Cortometrajes (short films) and film clips

6.6.1 Braveheart

At the beginning of the semester during the introductory *Cultura* presentation, I screened a brief excerpt of *Braveheart* (1995), a well-known English-language film that students were likely to be at least somewhat familiar with. I used the selected scene to demonstrate an analogy that culture and language unavoidably and invisibly shape our viewpoint in much the way that the camera angles used to film a scene subtly influence the spectator's interpretation of the action. I also used the scene as an example of how to look for symbolism.

In the selected excerpt, Mel Gibson's character William Wallace, the Scottish rebel leader, has been taken prisoner and is brought into the town square for his execution, standing up in a wagon bed chained to a pillar with his arms lashed to a crosspiece. I use this scene to show students how Gibson is filmed from a low angle with the camera pointed upward, the "hero shot": even though he is a prisoner, the camera angle tells us to admire his rebellion against authority. Additionally, his framing in the scene – upright, arms outstretched on a scaffold against the sky – set him up as a Christ figure, a heroic martyr charged with emotional symbolism whether or not the spectator consciously identified him as such. This excerpt also paved the way for a discussion of the differences between the medieval and contemporary worldview, as we contrasted the spectator's perception of Wallace with how the crowd regarded him in the scene. This conversation laid the groundwork for the upcoming legend *Los amantes de Teruel* and its interpretation, rooted in a rigid social class hierarchy and an understanding of the much greater value placed on obedience and conformity in that time as compared to ours.

6.6.2 "Tears and Tortillas"

Xochitl Dorsey's short film "Tears and Tortillas" (2006) was used several times in SPAN202 to practice different grammar points, beginning in Unit I.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O_8FYUTLtqc

6.6.2.1 Synopsis

A middle-aged Mexican or Mexican-American woman is in her kitchen making homemade tortillas while she listens to the radio. She adjusts the station and comes across a romantic ballad (Las hermanas Segovia's "*Cariñito idolatrado*" from the early 1950's). The woman becomes nostalgic. She glances at a photo of her (deceased) husband on the wall, utters "*Ay, Carlos, nuestra canción*" ("our song"). A single tear slides down her cheek and splashes onto the griddle, sizzling away as she begins to fry a tortilla. When she flips it over a moment later, her husband's image is clearly visible in the scorch marks on its surface. She shouts with excitement, calling for someone in the next room and, getting no response, runs out to share the news.

A moment later her teenaged grandson pokes his head through the doorway: "*¿Abuelita?*" ("Grandma?") He steps into the kitchen and opens the refrigerator door, hunting for something to eat.

He notices the pot of beans bubbling on the stove and the pile of fresh tortillas. He grabs a tortilla from the top of the stack (the one with his grandfather's image), spoons a dollop of beans onto it, rolls it up and takes a big bite just as his grandmother steps back into the kitchen with a shriek.

6.6.2.2 Pedagogical rationale

In addition to its brevity, rich cultural content and obvious humor, "Tears and Tortillas" is a very useful pedagogical resource for Spanish instructors because it is easily adaptable to a variety of topics across a range of levels. Its flexibility stems from the scarcity of dialogue: the action-driven portion of the film (not counting the credits) is approximately three minutes long, during which time the actors speak barely a dozen words. For the most part, the plot is clearly conveyed through the music.

I used this *cortometraje* as an opportunity for students to practice narrating in the past tense and identifying when it was appropriate to use the imperfect to describe ongoing and background actions and when the preterite was needed to foreground the main plot of the narrative.

6.6.3 El secreto de sus ojos

Juan José Campanella's Oscar-winning 2009 feature film *El secreto de sus ojos* (*The Secret in their Eyes*) is full of scenes with instructional potential, but requires careful preparation in order to implement successfully with intermediate learners. Its plot is complex and the actors speak the heavily Italian-influenced dialect of Argentinean Spanish, which American students usually find unfamiliar and challenging to understand.

6.6.3.1 Synopsis

I used two scenes from this film for classroom activities. In the first one the protagonists, Benjamín and Irene, have a tense conversation about why he seems to be avoiding her. As colleagues and members of different social classes, both of them feel the need to conceal and suppress their mutual attraction.

The second scene I used in SPAN202 takes place between Benjamín and another character, Ricardo. Years ago, Benjamín investigated the murder of Ricardo's wife and although the two of them succeeded in identifying her killer, he was never brought to justice due to political corruption in Argentina at the time of the military junta and the Dirty War. Decades later, Benjamín has decided to write a novel about the case and consults Ricardo for input.

6.6.3.2 Pedagogical rationale

The first scene described above presents a wonderful opportunity to discuss the social nuances of formal (*Usted*) and informal (generally *tú* but also *vos* in Argentina) second person pronouns. Students are asked to first predict and then identify which form Benjamín and Irene give each other (most students predict informal address and are surprised to note that they use *Usted* throughout the exchange but speak informally to the office intern who attempts to interrupt their conversation). This observation leads to a rich discussion about how the rules governing forms of address are much more complex than students have been led to believe from their elementary classes, and how gender roles, social class, professional vs. personal relationships and the country of origin of each party are all factors in determining whether formal or informal second-person pronouns are determined.

The second scene contains many examples of formal imperatives. It allows for a continuation of the previous discussion about formal vs. informal address (Benjamín and Ricardo are close in age and

social class, but their relationship is professional rather than personal so they give one another *Usted*), and it highlights many excellent examples of command forms of irregular verbs. It also contains a flashback sequence that can be used to review preterite/imperfect contrast.

6.6.4 “*Día de los muertos*” (“The Day of the Dead”)

This short film is a 2013 gold medal winner produced by Ashley Reynolds, Kate Graham and Lyndsey St. Pierre, students at Ringling College of Art and Design. It beautifully illustrates the significance of the Day of the Dead in Mexican culture.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iCQnUug-TEE>

6.6.4.1 *Synopsis*

The film opens in a village cemetery where a young girl is sadly laying a bouquet of flowers at her mother’s grave. A tear falls from her cheek to the ground and disappears. Instantly a plant begins to grow, sprouting a blue flower and winding itself around the girl’s wrist. It suddenly pulls her underground. At first she huddles, frightened, in the dark, and as her eyes begin to adjust she is terrified to see skeletons staring down at her. However, a moment later lively music begins to play and colored lights illuminate the scene. The skeletons are revealed to be a mariachi band and their music propels the little girl on a whirlwind journey through an underground fiesta full of bright colors, food, decorations, fancy clothes, and dancing, accompanied by a female skeleton whom she eventually recognizes as the spirit of her mother. They embrace warmly. When the girl opens her eyes, she is back at the gravesite, seemingly awakening from a dream, but happy and comforted by warm memories of her mother.

6.6.4.2 *Pedagogical rationale*

This film conveys the bittersweet but ultimately celebratory and festive atmosphere of a holiday that American students often struggle to understand, in part because of a very different treatment of death in US culture and in part because of the partial overlap of Hallowe’en and the difficulty of parsing the two holidays’ similarities and differences.

Like “Tears and Tortillas,” “*Día de los muertos*” is driven by music rather than dialogue and thus offers great flexibility for classroom use to practice any number of grammar topics. In SPAN 202 I used it to continue practicing the preterite/imperfect contrast. It lends itself especially well to this topic because the portions of the film that are more atmospheric (and thus appropriate to the imperfect) versus the more plot-driving, preterite-based sections are quite neatly demarcated.

6.6.5 “Feast”

The Walt Disney corporation released the Oscar-winning short “Feast” (2014) to accompany its animated feature film *Big Hero 6* (2014). Like the two aforementioned *cortometrajes*, it has only a word or two of dialogue and lends itself to many potential grammatical foci.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=x7ARYCDna3E>

6.6.5.1 *Synopsis*

“Feast” opens on a hungry puppy scrounging for food at night on the street amid discarded fast food wrappers. We see a hand offer him a french fry, which the puppy cautiously accepts. The next scene indicates that the puppy has been adopted and named “Winston” by the man, who has brought him home and proceeds to share all sorts of foods with him. One day while they are sharing a meal in a

restaurant, the man's attention is caught by the waitress. They begin dating and Winston's diet changes. One night the couple breaks up and the man reverts to eating and feeding Winston the tasty but unhealthy foods they used to share. Time passes until one day a sprig of parsley garnishing a take-out meal triggers nostalgia for the relationship and, in turn, spurs Winston to run off, leading his owner back to the restaurant where he reunites with his girlfriend.

6.6.5.2 Pedagogical rationale

I employed "Feast" in SPAN102 to contextualize an activity on direct and indirect object pronouns. Students had to construct sentences that correctly used the pronouns to show who did/gave/fed what to whom.

6.7 Songs

6.7.1 "Cuándo los ángeles lloran" ("When the Angels Cry")

This song, originally recorded by the Mexican rock band Maná in 1995 on their eponymous album and reissued in an acoustic version in 1999 on their *MTV Unplugged* album, tells the story of Brazilian labor and environmental activist Chico Mendes, who was murdered in 1983 in retaliation for his efforts to unionize his fellow rubber tappers and protect the Amazon from development that threatened their livelihoods.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=20YDYHNYZl4>

6.7.1.1 Content and implementation

Framed in the past tense, this song contains useful examples of how preterite and imperfect verbs narrate the events surrounding Chico Mendes' murder. Students received the lyrics with blank spaces for the past tense verbs and were first asked to predict what form they expected. They then listened to the song to fill in the verbs and gauge whether their predictions were correct.

6.7.1.2 Pedagogical rationale

This song is particularly useful because of a single example in the second verse: "*lo sabía ... la policía*" ("the police ... knew [about the murder]"). Although the difference disappears in English, the use of the unexpected imperfect *sabía* reveals that the police were, in fact, complicit in the assassination. In the normal course of events, the police first learn of a murder after the fact, when it is reported, which in Spanish would be expressed by the preterite form *supo*. When the verb *saber* appears in the imperfect, as in this line of the song, the implication is that the knowledge was ongoing/already existed, i.e. they knew that Chico Mendes was going to be murdered before it actually happened (and chose not to intervene). This demonstrates to students that being sensitive to the preterite/imperfect contrast can actually allow them to infer deeper meanings and capture nuances that may not come across clearly in English translation. Although this activity can be very challenging for students, it also paves the way for an epiphany about the implications of interpreting these forms correctly.

6.7.2 "A Dios le pido" ("I Ask of God")

"A Dios le pido" was 2002's Latin Grammy-winning crossover hit that introduced the Colombian artist Juanes to the North American market.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kMIaYXxLnUA>

6.7.2.1 Content and implementation

Students were given the complete lyrics to the song and asked to listen while watching the music video and trying to work out the meaning. They were guided by three comprehension questions highlighting specific grammatical details.

6.7.2.2 Pedagogical rationale

This song is useful for helping students to parse object pronouns. Direct and indirect object pronouns are notoriously difficult for English-speaking students, primarily because of syntax (they are placed before conjugated verbs, whereas English has very rigid subject-verb-object word order; therefore students frequently mistake them for subject pronouns and invert the meaning of the sentences.) They are also difficult because they can occur separately or in combination, they look alike, and third-person indirect object pronouns change from *le* or *les* to *se* when combined with a direct object pronoun (*se* also being used to denote reflexives, passives, impersonal and unintentional constructions!). Furthermore, pronoun usage varies across dialects in ways that greatly compound the confusion for nonnative learners.

In the SPAN202 activity, students were first directed to consider the title and analyze the use of *le* along with the *a personal* (an object marker particle) to translate it correctly. The second question asked them to consider what it would have meant if it were “*A Dios lo pido*” and analyze the contrast. Finally, they were directed to look for examples of the subjunctive and explain why it was so frequently used in this song. The predominant speech act in “*A Dios le pido*” is requests or supplications (in the form of prayer), which require the subjunctive in Spanish.

7. Links to the broader curriculum

7.1. Links to the overall Spanish program

As the final course in the basic sequence, SPAN202 represents a transition between introductory language classes and more advanced coursework. It poses a challenge to students because it requires them to reorient their approach to Spanish, from dealing with sentence-level discourse focused on a single grammar topic to the significantly more complex negotiation of more elaborate and extended discourse. It also requires students to grapple with unfamiliar content knowledge presented largely in the target language, unlike the introductory sequence in which most units focus on topics familiar to college students: their families, their studies, food, leisure activities, travel.

For those students who intend to continue to more advanced coursework, SPAN202 lays a foundation for literary interpretation. It equips them with tools for understanding grammar, story structure and symbolism that they will draw on as they move into more advanced courses. For students who cease their formal study of Spanish after completing 202, this course challenges them to synthesize their language skills and learn to both interpret and produce at a higher level of proficiency than they previously could.

7.2 Links to other courses

SPAN202 fosters the development of cultural and interpretive skills, as well as critical reading skills, that are applicable to many other disciplines, including but not limited to international studies; ethnic studies; women and gender studies; film, theatre and media studies; anthropology and sociology.

8. Selected evidence of student understanding and progress toward learning goals

8.1 Overall course grades

The students in my pilot sections of SPAN202 performed well in the course overall. I had been concerned that they would struggle with the more challenging curriculum and that their overall grades might suffer compared to other sections. However, this was not the case. As is typical of many introductory language classes, most grades fell in the A-to-B range, with a few exceptional students earning A+ and some of the weaker students earning B- through C.

Course grades in both of these sections of SPAN202 were actually higher across the board than the grades in the section of SPAN202 that I taught the previous fall with the old curriculum. This is likely due to the interaction of several factors: the fall section seemed to have a larger number of weak students. That section skewed significantly older than the two spring sections, with twice as many seniors. All three sections had similar numbers of freshmen, but both spring sections had more sophomores and one of them included two local high school students taking Spanish at UNL for college credit. All other things being equal, students who take SPAN202 tend to be more motivated to study Spanish for its own sake, while those to take it later in their careers tend to be finishing their requirements and often lack interest and/or aptitude in foreign languages. Another possible factor is that in Fall 2014 I was teaching a curriculum designed by someone else for the first time while simultaneously assessing it for revision; clearly, I had a critical stance toward some of the components which may have negatively influenced my ability to convey it clearly and successfully to students, particularly a group that included many struggling language learners. There is also the question of how comparable my grading was from semester to semester, which is difficult to address; while presumably there should be some consistency over time within a single subject, in many cases I was grading different assignments and projects which are not readily comparable. There is also the question of my own potential favorable bias toward my curricular materials, overlaying the entirely legitimate likelihood that I might teach better with custom-made materials.

Because language courses have a relatively low enrollment cap, this was a small sample size across both the pilot sections and the Fall 2015 comparison group, and the curricular revision warrants ongoing evaluation as it is implemented across more sections in the future. Presumably there will be weak students who struggle with the revised curriculum just as some did in my fall section with the old curriculum. It is also debatable whether the higher grade distribution is a desirable outcome or whether it may not contribute to grade inflation. Additional evaluation across a greater number of students is necessary to fairly assess these questions.

8.2 Quizzes and exams

8.2.1 Quizzes

In terms of grades, SPAN202 students struggled more with the grammar quizzes than with any other element of the course. In part this is because they were short (only 10 points) and targeted toward a single grammar topic, so that when a student misunderstood the instructions or did not know the material, the result was potentially severe. However, the quizzes also gave students very specific preparation that allowed them to succeed on similar sections on the unit exams.

8.2.2 Unit exams

With few exceptions, most students performed relatively well on the unit exams. I attribute this in part to the adjustments I made to their design. Traditional language exams, like traditional language teaching, are based on a deficit model that compares learners to what is termed the “monolingual native speaker ideal,” an inherently unattainable goal against which non-native speakers will always suffer by comparison.

By incorporating a greater degree of divergent assessment in the unit exams, I believe that I was better able to evaluate students based on what they could do, rather than what they could not do. The exams allowed even the weakest students to earn a few points on sections that they would likely have failed completely in the old format.

8.2.3. Extra credit questions on exams

The extra credit question at the end of each unit exam were some of the best indicators of students’ growing conceptual understanding of Spanish grammar and its interplay with narrative. I alluded to these questions previously, at the end of Section 4.7.3.1, noting that they were quite challenging and likely to be beyond the reach of the typical intermediate-proficiency 202 student. However, on every exam a few of the strongest students in each section managed to answer the extra credit question successfully. An example of one of these questions follows:

Los amantes de Teruel, líneas 54-56: “Pero, ¡hado cruel!, la misma tarde en que **se casaban** Isabel y Azagra, llegó Marcilla a Teruel rico y con salud.” (“But, cruel fate!, the same afternoon that Isabel and Azagra got married, Marcilla arrived in Teruel, rich and in good health.”)

It’s a little surprising to see **se casaban** in this sentence rather than **se casaron**. Can you explain why the author/storyteller chose the unexpected option for this verb?

This question targets the preterite/imperfect contrast and, as remarked, the somewhat unexpected use of the imperfect to describe Isabel and Rodrigo’s marriage. A number of students were able to articulate that it backgrounded the wedding and potentially heightened the tragedy by implying that Marcilla’s arrival occurred while it was still going on (and thus that he could potentially have interrupted it, had he known). A few also correctly pointed out that, based on information discussed during the Cultura portion of the unit, Isabel and Rodrigo’s marriage would not actually be considered completed until it was consummated that evening, and so the imperfect is a grammatically-appropriate way to indicate its “unfinished” state on the afternoon of Marcilla’s arrival, regardless of when the ceremony occurred. This particular line of text (like all the quotes used as extra credit questions) had not been pointed out to students during class discussion; the question was posed and they were left to answer based on what

they remembered from the unit. Such an analysis, I am confident, would be beyond the capabilities of students working with the former curriculum.

8.3 Final interview

The end-of-semester interview (described in **Section 4.8** in Benchmark Memo 2) yielded a number of examples of outstanding progress by students in their speaking proficiency. Several of the strongest students in the class gave excellent interviews; however, the example that gives me the most pride comes from Hunter, one of the students who struggled the most in the course. All semester long he experienced great difficulty in speaking and even in comprehending most of the Spanish spoken to him; he seemed to have not been well prepared by his previous courses. In all honesty, I expected him to have a terrible time with the final interview. When his turn arrived, I was pleasantly surprised to see that he had prepared thoroughly. He was able to understand all the question I asked him and, although he certainly made plenty of errors, he was able to successfully communicate his answer to a degree that would have been reasonably clear to a native speaker unfamiliar with English. That, for this student, represented real and quite impressive progress.

8.4 Final film project

Below I have included two examples of student final projects from the revised SPAN202. Both of these films show creative interpretations of legends the students read during the semester. They demonstrate learning by going beyond a literal portrayal of the narratives and incorporating elements such as parody and exaggeration to accentuate humor and nonverbal communicative resources such as costuming, sound effects and specific camera techniques to assist in conveying the story. Although there are certainly imperfections in the Spanish dialogue, the students in these films are nonetheless communicating their stories quite successfully.

El año que llovieron tortillas:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=WcaANrLunM8&feature=youtu.be>

Los amantes de Teruel:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HipOlijXK19g&feature=youtu.be>

9. Student self-assessment of learning progress

As part of my assessment of the change in the SPAN202 curriculum and materials, I asked students to self-assess their progress in a number of areas of proficiency. Summaries of their comments on each point appear below.

9.1 Growth in mastery of Spanish grammar

Students consistently reported a better understanding of key aspects of Spanish grammar, including preterite/imperfect contrast, the subjunctive, *ser* vs. *estar*, the various command forms, and object pronouns after completing SPAN202. Although the course is intended to include a *review* of

grammar rather than primary grammar instruction, several students mentioned that they learned some forms for the first time in this course:

“There were actually quite a few things that I came into this class not really understanding because I had been out of Spanish for a complete year and it was a bit of a struggle to pick back up where I had left off last spring. The direct and indirect objects was a big thing that I had learned, because none of it had even sounded familiar or had been taught to me in the previous years. Another thing was where the verb of the sentence would go when writing and talking in Spanish. A few of the other things I hadn’t remembered but learned in this class was the future, preterite and subjunctive, the new vocabulary that I hadn’t heard before, and then all of the Leyendas really helped with seeing proper sentence structure.”

“I have never learned how to form the imperfect subjunctive before this course. I also feel as though I have a lot better grip on preterite/imperfect and indirect and direct object pronouns after taking this course. Another thing that I now have mastered is the present subjunctive. I feel very comfortable now with how to form it and when to use it now. I also mastered commands, both formal and informal.”

“I learned how to better distinguish when to use preterite and imperfect, *almost to the point where I do not have to think about it for nearly as long*. I also learned why the subjunctive is used, *previously I only knew how to conjugate it and not why it was used*.” (Emphasis mine)

“Some things I have learned this semester are the true differences between *ser* and *estar*.”

“I am now able to talk in sentences without only using the present tense, which is a very big accomplishment.”

“This class brought everything together and helped me understand how all the grammar works in conjunction with everything.”

“The most valuable thing I learned ... is how specific you have to be about using your verbs. You can use the same verb form but if it is the preterite as opposed to the imperfect, it can mean something completely different.”

9.2 Growth in knowledge of history and cultures of the Spanish-speaking world

Students were able to name many historical and cultural details that they had learned as a result of SPAN202. They demonstrated a much richer awareness of the interplay of religion in the lives and worldviews of Spanish-speakers, including an understanding that although Christianity is the predominant religion in most of the Spanish-speaking world, Islam and Judaism both have an important historical presence in the culture. They also demonstrated a much better knowledge of the political conflicts that have shaped Spanish-speaking countries, from the formation of Spain as a nation under the Catholic Monarchs through the conquest of Latin American territories. They also have a better understanding of unfamiliar social customs such as sharing yerba mate and communal Day of the Dead celebrations.

9.3 Ability to read in Spanish

Nearly universally, students reported improvement to their ability to comprehend written Spanish thanks to the comparatively large amount of reading of somewhat extended texts (compared to their prior experience) they completed in SPAN202. Example comments appear below:

“I can pick up a lot more by reading and recognizing tenses and different conjugations. Instead of recognizing verbs but not knowing how they interplayed between people and things, now I can envision what each verb is directed to and have a better understanding of what's going on. Also, have a better feel for the emotion and intensity behind phrases that are conjugated a certain way.”

9.4 Ability to understand spoken Spanish

Understanding spoken Spanish is the more challenging of the receptive skill because it takes place “online,” as it were, in real time, and the listener has relatively little control over the speed of the discourse and must attempt to process language as it comes in. Below are some examples of how students described their gradual improvement in understanding spoken Spanish:

“I definitely have improved and I think the biggest reason is that Profe Kelly stuck to speaking in Spanish all the time, unless we needed help understanding grammar. That was helpful because it forced me to listen and watch and gather and think and to realize that I just needed to use my common sense to focus on what was happening.”

“I remember at the beginning of the semester, every day after class I would have a raging headache because when you would teach, I would scrunch my eyebrows and face in an attempt to listen better and understand the words coming out of your mouth. IT was really hard to take notes and listen to you at the same time. Actually, for about the first half of the semester I didn't even take notes in class because I wanted to listen to what you were saying rather than copy what was on the board. Now I can do both. It just took time.”

9.5 Ability to write in Spanish

As a productive rather than a receptive skill, writing is more challenging from the standpoint of bearing the communicative burden of generating language, although it is somewhat easier in that a writer has the advantage of time to formulate his or her thoughts and edit him- or herself. Students reflected on their writing progress in the following examples:

“My ability to write has greatly improved, but I still have a bit of a struggle with it. Learning more about how to use sentence structure with direct and indirect and where verbs go has definitely helped improve my writing skills.”

“Most definitely. I can notice a huge difference simply because I better understand how to use different verb forms and pronouns. Before I was just kind of trying to fit things into a sentence and throwing in pronouns when it sounded right, but now I know how to use them effectively and deliberately.”

“My ability to write in Spanish became unforced and more natural. I've noticed this in my impromptu class notes and writing essays.”

“My ability to write, I feel, has improved as well. With each Spanish class I take, I improve my vocabulary and understanding of the tenses used in Spanish. As this improves I am able to improve the quality of my writing in Spanish. For example, if you look at the first composition I wrote in my Spanish 201 class, it was much weaker than the last one I wrote by myself in Spanish 202. I feel that practice and exposure have been a great help on this front.”

This last comment by the student who assessed his or her progress over two semesters is particularly gratifying.

9.6 Ability to speak Spanish

Across the board, students were much more tentative about acknowledging improvement in their speaking as compared to other areas. Many of them admitted that they still felt very self-conscious of their limitations. Nonetheless, they did feel that a degree of improvement had taken place. Below are some of the most encouraging comments on this point:

“I am so much more confident that I was before this class! At the end of the semester, I was so apprehensive to answer the question of the day or to simply speak in front of the class. I still have a lot of improving to do but I am getting there.”

“This has been my biggest improvement. I noticed this in the conversation/interview I had with Profe Kelly at the end of the semester. I was able to have a somewhat proficient, lively conversation with her. This was extremely rewarding for me because I was able to see my hard work in the classroom pay off in a real life situation.”

“I usually find myself speaking and thinking in Spanish after class. I've improved especially in my ability to conjugate verbs and remember future and past tenses quickly in speaking.”

“It has improved a lot. I have noticed only because I am starting to think in Spanish and I don't have to translate it in my head as much anymore to English. I can simply think in Spanish.”

“I would say that my speaking in Spanish is my worst section. It has improved, thanks to the *pregunta del día* and encouraging us to ask and speak in Spanish during class.”

“I spoke more in Spanish as the semester went on. I also noticed how much easier the interview was compared to how I thought it would be at the beginning of the semester.”

9.7 Balance of Spanish and English spoken by the professor

Student remarks indicated that overall they were happy with the ratio of Spanish to English I spoke during the semester. They felt that they had ample opportunities to hear and absorb large quantities of Spanish during most of the classes, but they were reassured by the use of some English to clarify grammatical concepts. A few of the less proficient students stated that they would have preferred more English, but the majority recognized that they benefited as a result of class being conducted predominantly in Spanish.

9.8 Balance of Spanish and English spoken by self

Student responses to this question were rather uneven. Some reported that their Spanish-to-English ratio improved over time, but others admitted that they simply spoke less overall as time went on, and that they still felt self-conscious and inhibited about using Spanish in front of their peers. Students also commented that during group work it felt forced and artificial to try to speak Spanish when English was so obviously a more natural option.

10. Student evaluation of course components

As part of my evaluation of the materials and activities included in the pilot of the revised SPAN202 curriculum, I asked students to rate the usefulness of each element on a scale of 1 (not helpful) to 10 (extremely helpful) and to offer comments about what they found helpful or not. I calculated a quantitative measure for each element based on their responses. Not all students followed the instructions perfectly: a few of them forgot to include a numeric rating on a few items, and one person consistently rated items on a five- rather than a ten-point scale. I adjusted for these discrepancies by tabulating the number of valid responses for each question (including the responses of the student who used the five-point scale and converting the answers to fit the ten-point scale) and eliminating any answer that was qualitative only from the calculation of the average. This produced a helpful picture of the relative usefulness of the various components, supplemented by the qualitative data of the students' free responses. Averages and summaries for each component appear below.

On the whole, the course components rated favorably with scores ranging from 5.61 (moderately helpful) to 8.54 (extremely helpful).

10.1 *Leyendas* textbook

With an average score of 8.54, the *Leyendas* text was tied with one other component at the top of the students' usefulness rankings. Overall the students expressed very favorable opinions of the textbook and the stories, as well as of the opportunity to read target-language literature for the first time. A number of the students commented that they found the legends very challenging and a few of them were lukewarm toward the textbook but nobody rated it below a 5. Several students commented that they liked working with texts in a more sustained way, as opposed to the textbook chapter format used in their previous lower-level courses.

10.2 *Breaking Out of Beginner's Spanish*

I was very interested to see students' responses to this book, as it was one of the new additions I incorporated in the pilot course. In the total rankings, *Breaking Out ...* ended up being designated as the second-least useful element on the list, with an average score of 6.30. It also had one of the most disparate score profiles of all the elements: responses ranged all the way from 1 through 10. The comments reflected that many students felt it was a well-written and interesting book and that they learned a lot from it (and expected to in the future), but that it was not as well-integrated into the course as they would have liked. Many felt it was potentially very useful, but that its implementation had made it difficult to derive as much benefit from it as they hoped.

10.3 Course packet

The course packet earned the second-place ranking among course components, scoring 8.49. Their comments emphasized that they found the packet essential to practice the grammar, given that the *Leyendas* textbook did not include any explicitly grammar-focused content.

For both the course packet and the *Leyendas* textbook it is impossible to assess directly whether or not students experienced an improvement over previous semesters with the additional story and the unrevised packet. However, it is clear that the students who piloted this curricular revision felt that this iteration of the test and course packet paired well together.

10.4 PowerPoint presentations of historico-cultural background information

The SPAN202 students rated the history and culture PowerPoints at 8.36, the third-highest score. They particularly appreciated being able to access them outside of class, commenting that at times it was difficult to follow my lectures in Spanish and read all the information at the same time, but knowing they could download the presentation afterward allowed them to concentrate on listening.

One noteworthy trend that emerged from the data on this item is that students who said they reviewed the presentations after class on Blackboard tended to rate them very highly, while a number of the students who rated them lower mentioned that they rarely went back to study from them later.

10.5 PowerPoint presentations over grammar topics

The grammar PowerPoint presentations were rated an 8.54 for usefulness, tied for the top spot with the *Leyendas* textbook. Several students mentioned that they particularly benefited from the way the text was color-coded to help orient students to relevant grammatical features.

10.6 Cortometrajes (short films) and film clips

The short films and excerpts received an overall rating of 7.00. The free-response comments demonstrated that students had widely varying perceptions of what the purpose of including the film clips was. A subset of students felt that they were entertaining and enjoyable but not very useful. Some students said they would have preferred films with more Spanish dialogue, while others felt that the Spanish dialogue was impossible to understand. (In actual fact, as described in [Sections 9.6 through 9.6.5.2](#) of Benchmark Memo 2, only the clips from *El secreto de sus ojos* included significant Spanish dialogue, while the other clips were deliberately chosen for their scarcity of dialogue and adaptability to contextualize a variety of grammar topics). Some students clearly understood the purpose of the films and offered comments like “I felt the short films helped place the grammar appropriately in realistic scenes” and “[t]hey put the things we learned into perspective.”

10.7 Songs

Out of all the components of the revised SPAN202 curriculum, the songs were rated the least useful with a score of 5.61. A number of factors may help to explain this. In the first place, song lyrics can at times be difficult to understand in one’s native language, let alone in a second or foreign language. Song lyrics are also typically more condensed than ordinary prose and consequently more difficult to interpret. Like poetry, they may also employ unusual or surprising syntax and structures for musical reasons (rhythm, rhyme scheme, etc.) that make them more complicated from a linguistic perspective.

They may also lack the visual context that helps students understand film clips. For example, the “*Cuando los ángeles lloran*” YouTube video shows the band singing and provides no visual clues as to the content of the lyrics. The video for “*A Dios le pido*” is somewhat more helpful, but it is still largely a series of disconnected images lacking a cohesive central narrative.

An additional reason for the lower rating may simply be poor recall: several students’ comments stated that they couldn’t really remember the songs. Others stated that the words went by too fast and they didn’t get much out of the activity. A handful of students gave strongly favorable comments that they really enjoyed the songs and wished that the course had included more music, but the overall reaction was lukewarm.

10.8 Individual compositions

The individual compositions scored an 8.10. Most students appreciated being challenged to develop their writing skills and to synthesize the grammar with the content of the stories. A number of students also commented on the creative framing of the topics (described in [Section 4.6](#) of Benchmark Memo 2): “This was another aspect that helped push me to work on my Spanish and think about grammar, vocab, etc. It was also a great review for the legends and something fun to do to put your own twist on it.” “These were very crucial in developing my Spanish this semester. I think this helped me a lot more than anything – being able to write a little differently than the *leyendas* but staying along the same lines. It was nice to get professional feedback on them from you.”

One or two of the weaker students revealed through the candor of their comments how poorly prepared they were for Spanish 202: “Didn’t help me with my writing at all. At all. I feel like the compositions are made for students who are already good at writing in Spanish. Since I struggle to write in Spanish, it would have been more helpful to have a lesson over how sentences work in Spanish (since you don’t learn that in 101-202) (*sic*) and really learn how to form good sentences ...” This comment saddens me, but does not surprise me. Unfortunately I can see how many students might come through a typical introductory language sequence not seeing the forest for the trees, so to speak: by focusing sequentially on one verb conjugation after another, they fail to develop a clear sense of how to synthesize forms and construct coherent sentences, not to mention paragraphs and more extended forms of discourse.

10.9 Collaborative compositions with audio recording

The collaborative compositions that included both a written and oral component scored 7.21 in the students’ rankings. Students were less comfortable with the collaborative compositions than with the individual ones for a number of reasons. A major one was a general dislike of group work, either because of difficulties coordinating with a partner or problems ensuring a fair division of labor. Students were also somewhat less enthusiastic about the speaking dimension of this component, although some acknowledged that it was helpful.

One comment that candidly expresses students’ ambivalence about the collaborative compositions noted that “[i]t was fun working with other people on the compositions because together we had great ideas and were able to check each other’s grammar. However, if I would have been with someone who did not care about getting a good grade on this, my rating would be lower. To work with other people can be really tricky because some people care and other’s don’t. I’m just glad I had two really good partners that cared.” Another student expressed a different, more solidly favorable take: “I

think the composiciones colaborativas were even more useful than the individuales because you were able to see how other people interpret how to do the compositions and the leyendas, and what aspects of grammar, vocab, etc. they liked to use to tell stories.”

10.10 Final video project

Although the final video was the students’ capstone project in SPAN202 and many of them were very well executed, they scored relatively low in the rankings at 6.61. Much of this seems to be due to a similar ambivalence about group work as was described above in [Section 10.9](#).

10.11 Class discussions and activities

SPAN202’s classroom discussions and activities were rated highly, at 8.10. A very few exceptions criticized them and described them as a waste of time. I suspect that this may be a product of the tendency for students to gravitate toward peers at a similar level of proficiency to their own. In language classrooms there is often a cluster of weak students who persistently gravitate toward working together and resist seeking help from more proficient students. (In fairness, more proficient students are often equally reluctant to reach out to the weakest students as activity partners.) The former seem to be self-conscious about being a drag on their classmates while the latter expect to get very little out of working with a much less proficient partner. In any event, I can understand that students who consistently work together and consistently fail to grasp the material being studied would indeed regard pair and group work as a waste of time.

10.12 *La pregunta del día* (“Question of the day”)

I was very pleasantly surprised to see that the students of SPAN202 rated the *preguntas del día* quite favorably at a 7.93. The students appreciated the warm-up at the beginning of class, as well as the obligation to speak up at least once per day. They also liked how the questions incorporated examples of the grammar and helped them get to know their classmates better, including learning their names. As one student stated candidly, “[a]s much as I do not like speaking Spanish (*sic*) in front of my peers, this was good practice for me. It helped get me out of my comfort zone and practice speaking Spanish.” Another student commented, “I didn’t actually like answering them but being forced to come up with a sentence and saying it to the class helped me think about what I wanted to say and also helped me to read the questions and understand what was being asked of me.” A third noted that “[a]t first, I was a little nervous to speak Spanish in front of the class, but I ended up loving them because the questions were actually topics you would talk about in real-life conversations instead of just about the course material.”

11. Future directions for the SPAN202 curricular revision

Now that the pilot semester has been completed, the SPAN202 curricular revision will continue in modified form. As the Basic Spanish program coordinator, one of my responsibilities is to invest continued efforts to improving the individual courses and the program as a whole. To that end, I will continue to evaluate and revise SPAN202 in three principal ways, described below.

11.1 Further revisions

I will continue to teach this course during academic year 2015-2016, during which time I will continue to look for opportunities to improve the course packet and develop better and more contextualized activities and PowerPoints, both for my own use and to support colleagues as they begin to teach SPAN202 with the revised curriculum. I would like to build a rich library of resources that they can draw on according to their preferences, and, ideally, to incorporate materials that they may already be using in their sections.

In the near future, I will also need to reassess the *Leyendas* textbook, which is coming out in a new edition, and the choice of legends included in 202. One of the legends currently in use does not appear in the next edition of the textbook. There may be future changes to the course content based on these and other factors.

11.2 Building capacity and winning the investment of other instructors in the Basic Spanish Program

As I have mentioned in previous sections, I experienced some difficulty teaching SPAN202 for the first time in Fall 2014 using someone else's curriculum and materials. Therefore, I have every reason to expect that some of my colleagues might also struggle to teach with materials that, to me, are clear and intuitive.

I may also have to contend with basic resistance to change. As I was contemplating the curricular revision in Fall 2014 I met with several experienced SPAN202 instructors to get their input, and some of them were a bit protective of the course and discouraged me from making major changes. As I implement the revised curriculum across all sections of the course in the fall, I may need to work on winning instructors' enthusiasm and convincing them of the value of the changes. I will be interested to receive feedback from veteran instructors of SPAN202 as they begin working with the new sequence and materials.

11.3 Other courses in the sequence

Finally, as Basic Spanish program coordinator I am also responsible for four (soon to be five) other courses in addition to SPAN202, and part of my role is to ensure continuity and a logical progression through the sequence. My work on this course has emphasized that students in the introductory courses seem to be emerging with a fragmentary and decontextualized picture of the language, and the 101-201 sequence may be in need of an overhaul as well.

12 Appendices

INFORMED STUDENT CONSENT STATEMENT

Course Title: SPANISH 202 (Sections 02 & 04)
Teacher Name: KINGSBURY BRUNETTO
Semester/Year: SPRING 2015

Your teacher is conducting an inquiry into his/her teaching. He/she is examining the effectiveness of his/her instructional strategies, comparing, and/or evaluating the effectiveness of instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. This form requests your consent to allow your classroom performance data (e.g., examination scores, project grades, attendance records) and coursework (e.g., examinations, quizzes, papers, drawings) to be included as part of your teacher's classroom inquiry. Examples of actual student work are often very useful to demonstrate how much and how deeply students are learning. The form also asks you to allow your teacher to use these data for possible publication or presentation.

Your participation in this inquiry is voluntary, and there is no compensation should you choose to participate. The inquiry will be conducted as part of the class practice and activities as defined in your course syllabus. Your participation is not expected to require any added out-of-class time. Unless otherwise specified, your name will be removed from all course work examples and you will not be referred to by name in any published materials or in any presentations. Once the classroom inquiry is complete, all copies of your course work and/or examples that were retained by your teacher will be treated in the same manner as he/she maintains student work and records from other courses.

To indicate your willingness to have your classroom performance data included, please check one of the following two choices:

I allow my classroom performance data to be included in my teacher's classroom inquiry.

I do not allow my classroom performance data to be included in my teacher's classroom inquiry.

To indicate your willingness to have your coursework included, please check one of the following two choices:

I allow copies of my coursework to be included in my teacher's classroom inquiry.

I do not allow copies of my coursework to be included in my teacher's classroom inquiry.

If you are willing to have your coursework included, check one of the following two choices:

I decline to have my name remain on any work that is included

I want my name to remain on any course work that is included.

Please specify any additional restrictions on the use of your classroom work:

By signing below you give your permission for work you produce for this course (and your classroom performance data) to be used with the restrictions and for the purposes indicated above. You understand that your grade is not connected in any way with your participation in this inquiry, and that your anonymity will be maintained unless you designate otherwise. Finally, you understand that you are free to decide not to participate in this study or to withdraw at any time without adversely affecting your relationship with your teacher or the university, and withdrawal will not result in any loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Your Name (please print):

Your Permanent Address:

Email:

Signature: _____

Date: _____

If you have questions or concerns, please discuss them with your teacher (Dr. XXXX, Department of XXXX, XXX-XXXX, XXXX@unl.edu).

Baremo (Rubric) para evaluar la participación

Nombre _____

Evaluation Criteria	High: 2 points	Moderate: 1-1.5 points	Low: .5 point	None: 0 pts	Total
<p>Use of Spanish in Class: This category assesses the quality of participation with respect to the target language.</p>	<p>The student does an <i>outstanding</i> job of speaking Spanish in class as much as possible, attempting to stretch his/her limits and communicate more complex ideas. Uses Spanish for side conversations and socializing, helping encourage classmates to use it as well. Goes <i>above and beyond expectations for proficiency level</i>.</p>	<p>The student does an <i>adequate and acceptable</i> job of using Spanish within his/her limits, but lapses into English if s/he perceives something to be too complex. May use some Spanish for socializing and side conversations. <i>Meets expectations for proficiency level</i>.</p>	<p>The student does a <i>marginally acceptable</i> job of using Spanish in class, but is prone to using English even when talking about things s/he would be able to express in Spanish. Tends to use English for most socializing and side conversations, which may discourage others from using Spanish. <i>Falls somewhat short of expectations for proficiency level</i>.</p>	<p>The student <i>falls far short of expectations</i> in terms of using Spanish. Defaults to English even for topics already studied in Spanish. No effort to ask questions or otherwise stretch own limits in Spanish. Makes little or no use of Spanish apart from class activities; all socializing and side conversations take place in English. May distract/derail other students who attempt to interact in Spanish. Or no basis for evaluation due to excessive absence.</p>	
<p>Quality of Participation: This category assesses the quality of the student's contribution to class interactions.</p>	<p>Student <i>participates enthusiastically</i>. Always responds when called upon and regularly volunteers responses, asks questions and/or initiates discussions. Demonstrates leadership in group activities. Avoids distracting self, others with phone and/or computer use.</p>	<p>Student <i>participates willingly</i>. Responds readily when called upon by the instructor. Occasionally asks questions, volunteers responses and/or initiates discussions; contributes to successful group activities. Rarely distracted by phone and/or computer use.</p>	<p>The student <i>participates reluctantly</i>. Responds when called upon, but rarely/never volunteers answers, asks questions or initiates discussion. Contributes minimally during group work, doing only what is required to complete activities. May distract self and others with phone and/or computer use.</p>	<p>The student <i>resists participating</i> in class to some extent. Does not volunteer responses; does not ask questions or initiate discussion; may refuse to answer when called upon by the instructor. Does not actively contribute during group work and may contribute to the failure of activities. May distract self and others with phone and/or computer use. Or no basis for evaluation due to absence.</p>	
<p>Quality of Preparation: This category evaluates the student's readiness to participate as evidenced by preparation.</p>	<p>Student is <i>always well-prepared</i> for class: work is done on time; student informs self of deadlines and consistently meets them; reading is done ahead of time and student is prepared to contribute.</p>	<p>Student is <i>moderately prepared</i> for class: work is usually done on time; student remembers most deadlines but is late on occasion; reading is usually done and student is usually prepared to contribute.</p>	<p>Student is <i>not reliably prepared</i> for class: homework is frequently late; student often forgets deadlines and submits late work; reading has usually not been done in advance and student is often not prepared to contribute.</p>	<p>Student is <i>clearly unprepared</i> for class: work is frequently late or missing, student is unaware of deadlines and fails to submit work; reading has obviously not been done and student is unprepared to contribute. Or no basis for evaluation due to absence.</p>	
<p>Teamwork: This category evaluates the student's contribution to classmates through collaboration.</p>	<p>Student <i>fosters others' learning</i> by reaching out to classmates, getting to know them by name, working with a wide range of people in different group configurations, and building a sense of classroom community.</p>	<p>Student <i>participates in others' learning</i> by responding to classmates, learning some of their names, and working with a subset of them. Makes a limited contribution to building a sense of classroom community.</p>	<p>Student <i>demonstrates little involvement in others' learning</i> by reluctantly responding when prompted. Makes little effort to get to know classmates; typically defaults to working with the same few people; resists being part of a classroom community.</p>	<p>Student <i>resists contributing to others' learning</i>. Remains passive during group activities, makes no effort to get to know classmates or learn their names; always defaults to working with the same partner/group and resists instructions to work with new people; undermines efforts to build a classroom community. Or no basis for evaluation due to excessive absence.</p>	
<p>Listening: This category evaluates the student's attentiveness to the instructor and classmates.</p>	<p>Student consistently <i>listens attentively</i> to the instructor and to classmates, and demonstrates this by responding appropriately.</p>	<p>Student <i>listens somewhat attentively</i> to the instructor and to classmates, but may occasionally get distracted or fail to respond appropriately.</p>	<p>Student <i>listens with limited attentiveness</i> to the instructor and to classmates. May tend to tune out or continue talking instead of listening, and may be unable to respond appropriately.</p>	<p>Student is <i>inattentive</i> to instructor and/or classmates. Demonstrates a tendency to tune out and relies on others to relay instructions (often in English). Continues talking over the instructor instead of listening. Often fails to respond appropriately. Or no basis for evaluation due to absence.</p>	

Comments:

TOTAL: _____/10

Kingsbury Brunetto

Appendix C: Example composition assignment

Span202 – Literatura y Cultura (Kingsbury Brunetto)

Unidad I: *Los amantes de Teruel*

Composición – el viernes, 6 de febrero (en clase)

Pautas (*guidelines*)

Del programa de curso:

Compositions: For each legend we read this semester, you will write a composition. Two of them will be individual and two of them will be collaborative. You will be asked to paraphrase the legend or a portion of it, writing dialogue for the characters. For the collaborative compositions, you and your partner(s) will then create an audio recording of you reading the dialogue you have produced.

Esta primera composición es **individual**. Vas a crear diálogo para **una** de las escenas siguientes:

- La declaración de amor entre Juan e Isabel (p. 33, líneas 9-11): *Write the conversation between Isabel and Juan in which they tell one another what made each of them fall in love (using the two forms of the past tense to show preterite and imperfect aspect) and talk about their promises to each other and their hopes and wishes for their future (using the subjunctive).*
- El supuesto “sueño” de Isabel (p. 35, líneas 83-87): *Write the story Isabel tells Rodrigo about the dream about her friend she pretends to have had, in which she is really telling what just happened when she awoke to find Juan in the room. (You will need to use the two forms of the past tense to talk about the events of the dream; you should also use the subjunctive to talk about Isabel and/or Rodrigo’s reaction to the information, i.e. “me sorprende que ... / es [adjective] que...” etc.)*
- La explicación de don Rodrigo en el funeral (p. 35, líneas 106-108): *Write the scene at the funeral, immediately after Isabel drops dead, when don Rodrigo tells everyone present the truth about what happened. (You will need to use the two forms of the past tense when don Rodrigo narrates the events, and the subjunctive when the listeners react to what they are hearing, i.e. “Es increíble que ... / No puedo creer que ... / Qué sorpresa que ...” etc.)*

Puedes preparar **1 página de apuntes**. (O sea, no puedes escribir toda la composición de antemano [*in advance*], pero puedes crearte un bosquejo [*outline*] y unos apuntes sobre la gramática, el vocabulario, expresiones, etc., que quieras incorporar.

- Hay que entregarme tu página de apuntes cuando me entregues la composición.

- Puedes usar un diccionario durante la hora de clase, pero **no** puedes usar el texto.

- Puedes usar wordreference.com en la computadora principal del salón de clase; no puedes usar tu teléfono o computadora personal.

SPAN202
Examen ##
Total: 50 puntos

Nombre: _____

At the 202 level, we wish to promote more independent communication and the ability to synthesize grammar and content effectively. To that end, the evaluations should also reflect this goal. One way of doing that is to write sections with a divergent (i.e. allowing for a variety of possible correct outcomes) rather than convergent (i.e. one single correct answer) orientation. This template will illustrate how to incorporate greater divergence in the evaluations. Look to the other exams in this folder for more specific examples.

I. Gramática (## puntos)

A. Grammar Point 1 (## puntos)

Insofar as possible, the first section of the exam should relate to a *cortometraje* or film clip (or some other contextualized example) that students have worked with in class during the past unit. If possible, it is also good to design this section with options (divergent evaluation) so that students have some freedom in their responses and can demonstrate what they know how to do. (For example, give a list of infinitive verbs with more options than the number of points in the section and ask students to write X# of sentences describing the film clip using the targeted verb form, etc.)

B, C, D, etc. Remaining Grammar Points (## puntos)

Subsequent sections may be convergent or divergent depending upon the grammar point. (For example, it usually makes more sense to test direct & indirect object pronouns convergently.)

II. Vocabulario (## puntos)

This section can take a variety of formats: matching, fill-in-the-blank, multiple choice, short answer, etc., and may be convergent, divergent, or a combination of both types.

III. Preguntas de respuesta breve: la leyenda, la historia, la cultura (## puntos)

Elige **cinco** de las preguntas a continuación. Contéstalas con **1-2 oraciones completas en español**. (3 ptos/pregunta)

This section is divergent in the sense that students have a larger number of options (usually ~8 questions) than they are required to answer (5) and can select the questions they feel best prepared to respond to. 3 points per question allows the instructor to grant partial credit where appropriate.